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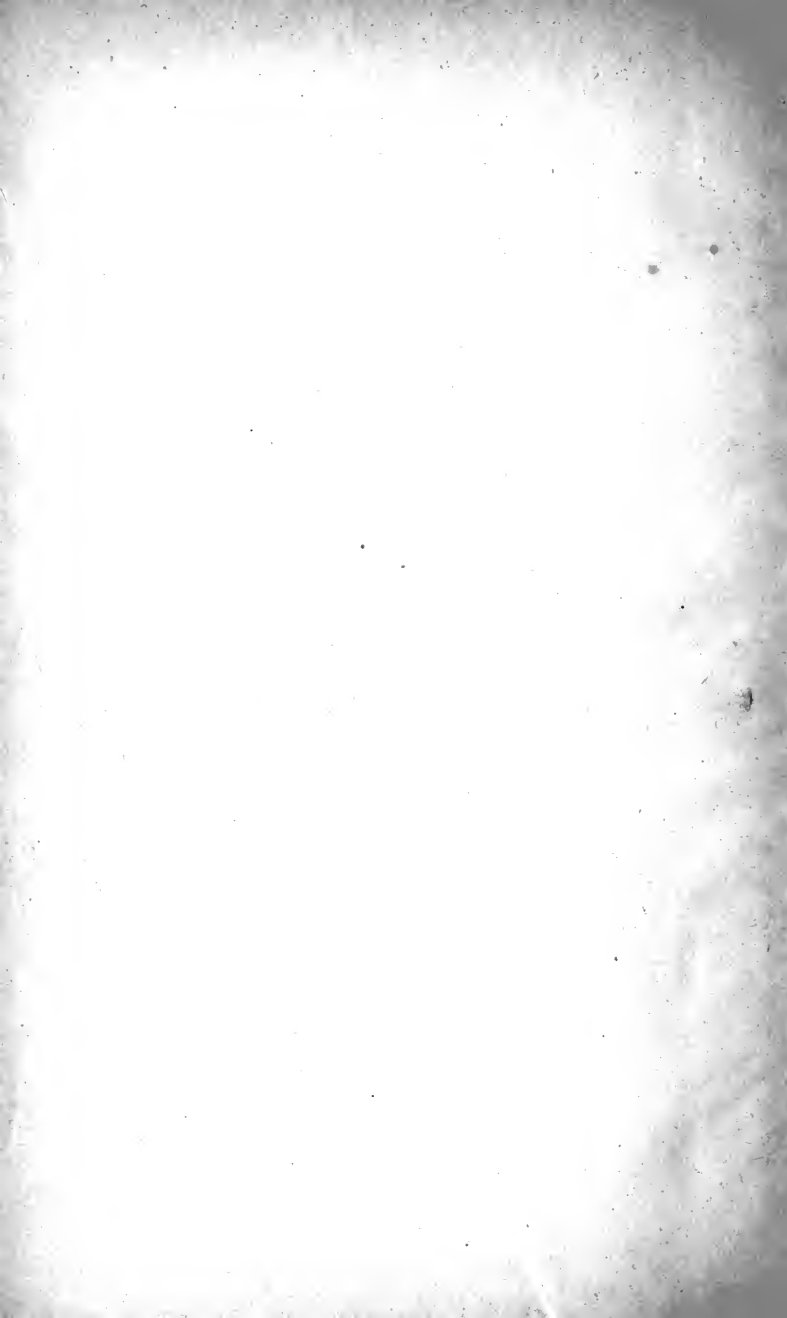
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IVY LEAVES.



IVY LEAVES.

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BY
MARY ELLEN ATKINSON.



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THIS Ivy grew upon the dear church-wall,
Clung loving round its pillars, crept across
The colored splendors of its window fair,
And leaned where it could feel the organ thrill
Which shook our hearts too with its harmony.

This Ivy hung above the sacred porch
And made the carven arches bright and fair
With little creeping sprays of tender green,
A memory of summer in the snow,
The joy of Christmas lingering all the year.

Under this Ivy I have entered in
From all the tumult of the outer world
Into the quiet of my Father's house,
From all the heat and burden of the day,
Into the joy of peace and holy rest.

Under this Ivy I have passed again
Out from the sacred stillness and the songs
Of happy worship, to the work-day world,
Refreshed and strengthened. For dear memory's sake
I pluck these Ivy leaves to take with me.

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IVY LEAVES.

The Hermit of Mount Carmel.

PROEM.

THROUGH the unbounded realms of space,
Dim-lighted by a million suns,
This little world, our dwelling-place,
Its never-ceasing spiral runs.
Through those dim spaces infinite,
The homes of planets, still and vast,
A giant cone of deeper night,
The shadow of the earth, is cast.

Yet Science, with the mystic rod
Placed by the Master in her hand,
To measure all the works of God,
His wonders, ever new and grand,

Hath found the way to distant skies
To count and weigh the worlds of light :
She knows how far earth's shadow lies
Across the boundless void of night.

Alas ! the deeper shade of sin
Falls on us from the distant past,
And none may know how deep and far
Its dark and dreary night is cast.
The throne of God itself may stand
Alone unshadowed by the curse
Which changes all the finite life
Of his far-spreading universe.

A lonely Eremite
On Carmel's rocky height
Sat watching from his solitary steep
The purple evening vapors creep
Around the silent circle of the sea,
When suddenly
He noticed where, beneath him in the bay,
A heavy-freighted merchant-vessel lay ;
Her sails were duly set,
Her anchor weighed, and yet

She never moved, but seemed to lie at rest
With drooping flags, upon the water's breast.
Whether it stirred the recollection
Of foregone human toil and strife,
Or seemed a sad and drear reflection
Of his own inner life ;—
Whate'er the thought might be, 'twas one of pain ;
And, turning from the darkening, misty main,
The sighing forest, and the infinite skies,
That seemed to haunt him with unnumbered eyes,
He stooped to enter his dim cell again.

When hark !
A rapturous song
Wakes all the echoes of the slumbering dark :
It floats along,
Too glad for earth, yet too distinct for heaven,
For it was never given
To mortal man to hear
The song of heaven so near,
So loud and clear.
Far in the sky the advent angels sang,
“Glory to God !” but this
Just from the rocky height above him rang ;
Yet earth hath no such bliss
As flooded all the air with blessedness.

Up the steep crag he sprang,
Parting the dewy boughs with eager hands.
Nor does he pause nor stop
Till on the mountain-top,
Breathless with wonder and surprise, he stands ;
For on that lonely height
An angel kneels, all clothed in dazzling light,
From whose celestial heart and tongue is poured
That wondrous song of rapture to the Lord.

The Eremite stood still,
While o'er him swept the stars in silent march,
Rapt in celestial ecstasy, until
The midnight blue had faded from heaven's arch,
And crystal-clear it glowed with growing dawn.
Earth woke with early morn,
And bird and breeze and flower took up the lay
That died upon the angel's lips away.
Cleaving the air with pinion dazzling white,
And floating robe of pure and lambent light,
Not back to heaven again
The seraph winged his thought-like flight.
The wondering hermit saw his form alight
Upon the low, surrounding plain ;
The eyelids closed upon his dazzled sight,
And when he looked again

He saw a pilgrim, clad in sombre gown,
Enter with eager step the distant town.

“What would he there?” the hermit questioned then.

“Why mingle with the sin-defiled, the low,
The worthless and benighted sons of men,
Alighting like a snow-white bird of God,
Accustomed to the heights where splendors glow,
Upon the muddy streets where few have trod
Without defilement?” Then a memory came
Of how the Son of God himself had brought
Unto these earthly shores no vengeful flame,
But deeds of mercy and of love had wrought
Even unto death, and had not weary been
Of serving men all lost in woe and sin.
Is there, then, one thing nobler than to live
In contemplation deep and thought sublime?
Can heaven itself no higher purpose give
Than that which in the tasks of earth and time
Is set before us? Hath the world above
No other watchword than that scorned one, *Love*?
The question smote across his scheme of life,
Were God’s great plan and his indeed at strife?

O’erwrought with high emotion so intense,
He sank upon the dewy ground,

And heavy slumber drowned each weary sense,
O'erflowing sight and sound
With rest profound.
The bird, and bee, and large-winged butterfly,
And all the forest's little denizens,
Were stirring round him as the hours stole by,
And o'er his head the eagle from the fens
Flew with full beak unto her eyrie high;
And at his feet the tinkling rivulet fell
With fairy music down from ledge to ledge,
Slow dropping o'er the gray rock's mossy edge,
Sweet and monotonous as a silver bell.
Whether he mused or slept he scarce could tell,
But light shone on him from the central Throne;
Heaven's great, high wall of crystal shining through,
And piercing yonder too close veil of blue
Which hides the glory earth hath never known.

Alas! what thoughts we think of heaven!
Blind children talking of the light;
The deaf describing music's might!
Pray God that we may be forgiven
That on our best conceptions of his bliss
There ever doth remain
The inevitable stain
Of our hearts' dreary sin and narrowness.

God hath not told us what shall be,
Lest we, with our depraved and earth-born taste,
Should turn aside from life's celestial tree
To eat the poisoned fruits of earth's bleak waste,
Sunk far too low to know one pure desire
Till God himself hath taught us to aspire.
We have no words with which to speak of heaven ;
All language fails and breaks down utterly
With such a stress upon it, as a wire
Surcharged and broken with electric fire ;
Else had the few who have returned thence, given
Some little glimpse of life beyond the sky,—
For had they spoken, that much-longed-for lore
Had echoed down the ages evermore.

This lesson, if none else, the vision taught,
That the celestial life was not the calm,
Inert, inactive, cloistral life he thought,
When fadeless poppies bloomed beside the palm.
O life beyond the bounds of sense,
Beyond the fretting links of time !
O life ! O fullest life ! intense,
Unfettered, and sublime !
The happy souls who have gone hence
Are altered less by the supernal grace
And perfect beauty of each faultless face,

Than by the look of high intelligence
Forever growing in their eyes,
Brightened by gazing on those spheres of truth
Whose slender crescent, seen in cloudy skies,
Engaged the homage of their earthly youth.
Here the faint spark
Of heavenly life and love burns dim and dark,
By heavy clouds oppressed,
Smoke of self-worship, incense all unblest.
But there the seraphs burn with pure desire,
A clear celestial fire ;
And there, upon the glassy sea,
Stand God's swift messengers, alert with love,
And girt with strength and tireless energy,
For service in the worlds above
Or worlds below, and there the archangels stand,
God's trenchant weapons in their mailed right hand,
Mighty to wrestle with his mighty foes.
In those high spheres of soul-life none repose,
For none are weary, but with ceaseless flight
Their unencumbered minds upsoar
Into the radiance of the Light of Light,
From glory unto glory, evermore.

Behold !

The sea and sky are blent in sunset's gold,
The level rays fill all the woods with light,
And crown the hills with transient glory bright.

Behold !

The clouds their blazoned banners wide unfold,
And haste in shining cohorts to the west,
Where rides their monarch to triumphant rest.

Behold !

The splendor gilds old Carmel's summit bold !
And hark ! once more the angel anthem rings,
" O glory, glory to the King of kings ! "

Then sleep removes her hand,
That gentle hand, all cool with dews of balm,
From off the hermit's eyelids, and the grand,
Bright vision of the heavenly joy and calm,
That glimpse of glory, too divine to last,
Becomes a part of the receding past.
To wake from such a dream
To such reality—the angel there—
Could hardly seem
Like utter loss, and in an ecstasy
He listens to the anthem thrilling
The crystal air
With wondrous melody,

And to the grand words, filling
His soul with great thoughts never known before,
Until, like sound of waves along the shore,
The last rich cadence dies,
Breaking upon the golden strand of sunset skies.
Then silence falls,
And darkness closes round her dusky walls,
And in heaven's arch the night
Has set her steady cressets, all alight,
And all night long the sentinel wind goes round
That sacred peak, the angel's camping-ground.
What converse hold they 'neath night's canopy,
Angel and earth-child, till the break of day?
What holy secrets of the upper sky
Strike their strange music through life's lowly lay?
What veiling clouds are thrust away
To show the crystal steps whereby
The strong, victorious soul may climb,
Angel-encircled, to a life sublime?

A blessed night it was, of holy thought
Lifted above all things of earth and time;
No wonder that it wrought
A change forever on the human heart
Admitted to such sacred communings,
Exalting it, as if on angel-wings,

Into a higher range of life, apart
From self and all its narrow interests.
As the young eagles, from their native nests,
Rise on some summer day, and fly
Far through the radiant sky,
And nevermore lie groveling there,—
So to his soul was strong, new impulse given,
Lifting it up into the calm, pure air,
The sunlit atmosphere of heaven.

Gone ! like a rich bell's chime
Dying in utter silence ! he is gone !
And that high mount which with his brightness shone
Like snowy peaks at sunrise, all aglow,
Grew dark and lonely with the sudden woe
Of desolation, and the hermit stood
Bewildered with the sense of utter loss,
Till sunrise lighted up the solemn wood,
And shot its golden arrows far across
The dim expanse of the mysterious sea,
And then a slow, faint sunrise of the heart,
Breaking through dreary fog of doubts and fears,
Its trembling rays began to dart
Into the gloom of half-forgotten years ;
Until the dreary clouds were thrust apart,
And God's forgiving smile was seen
Beaming, like radiance from celestial spheres,

On all the weary wandering that had been,
And life that yet might be.
And when he thought
On all the angel's words that holy night,
The mist of darkness melted from his sight :
He saw how God, in wisest love, had planned
His whole life for him—how before his way
The ladder reaching unto heaven had stood,
While he, in proud self-will, had turned away,
To toil along the vain world's thorny sand,
Tracking a lonely path with tears and blood ;
Seeking for earth's great things and finding naught ;
Reaping sad failure from the barren strand
Where he, with manhood's prime of strength, had
 wrought ;
Letting God's opportunities pass by—
Those heavenly tides which would have borne him on
To honor, power, and immortality—
Till strength had ebbed and aspiration gone,
And o'er the mental light which God had given
The shadow of hell's darkness crept,
Till his life's angel, watching him from heaven,
Had looked into the face of Christ, and wept !

“Yea, go !” said that divinest Voice, which oft
Had faltered with a gush of pitying tears,
In three and thirty toilsome earthly years,—

“Yea, go!” with words of blessing, uttered soft,
Yet heard through all heaven’s myriad harmonies;
“Go teach him how, self’s narrow cerements riven,
His soul may broaden in the light of heaven,
And rise, on love’s strong pinions, to the skies.”

And should it be in vain, the tender love
Which brooded from the upper realms o’er him?
Could he reject the message from above,
Which fain would link him with the cherubim
By giving him their work, their love, their joy?
How could he live again his barren life,
After a glimpse of such divine employ,
Or struggle on, with God’s blest will at strife,
And hear, through all, the fall of angel tears?

No: life must change!
He must retrieve his wasted years,
Must live for God and man, albeit strange
To take the work so long refused,
And bend his will to Christ’s stern yoke, which pressed
Hard on the stubborn shoulders, long unused
To mild submission, ordered work and rest.
Slow grew the ideal of a life of love,
Fruitful for others, as was Christ’s on earth,
Within his mind. The live seed from above
Sprang, like a nascent palm-tree, into birth,

Upbuilding, day by day, the gradual stem,
To uphold, at length, a blossomy diadem.
So bloomed his life at last in blessed flowers,
The beauty of most loving thoughts and deeds,—
Words, falling on the heart like sweet spring showers,
And sympathies, like Gilead's soothing balm,
To pour upon the wound that aches and bleeds,
And still grief's restless murmurs into calm;—
Tasks of benignant love to suffering man,
Begun for him by angel-hands so well
That oftentimes, distrustful, he began
To question if his lowly work, which fell
So far below it, could accepted be.
But then God's voiceless answer came between
His heart and cold despair, to heal and bless :
God's answer—no mere words, but rich success
And joy of heart ; and so he learned to lean
Upon that kind encouragement, which still
Quickened his failing strength, confirmed his wavering will.

So died the discord from his heart at last,
For it was tuned to Christ's, and evermore
Chimed with the key-note of all harmony—
All joy and blessing, present and to be.
The old remorse and bitter hate were o'er,
And peace encircled all the dreary past,

And wrapped his weary soul in boundless rest
Most still and blest.

Until his soul's horizon suddenly
Withdrew its earthly boundary, and lo !
He stood beside death's dark and narrow sea,
And saw beyond the eternal glory glow.
And soft and low, as floating from afar,
Beyond the spaces round the morning star,
And sweeter than the sweetest melodies
That ever breathed beneath our cloudy skies,
Clearer than flute or bird,
A voice was heard,—

“Come in, thou blessed one !
Thy work is done !
Inherit all the joy prepared for thee.
Come to thy home at last !
Thy loving service past
My heart accepts as rendered unto Me.
Thou hast been faithful through earth's weary strife,
Receive thy crown of life.”

EPILOGUE.

THE countless stars are censers swinging
Before the great white central throne,
Incense of prayers and praises bringing
To Him who ruleth there alone.

Oh, child of earth ! oh, fallen heart !
A grain of incense-dust thou art.
Wilt thou refuse thy meed to bring
Of lowly service to thy King ?

Life is a lyre of many strings ;
The ages strike the solemn chords.
Eternity sublimely sings
The glory of the Lord of lords.
Why wilt thou, O discordant heart,
Break in on such sublime accord,
Or, silent, fail to bear thy part,
While all things praise creation's Lord ?

The Master-Poet builds his verse—
All life its words, all love its rhyme ;
His poem is the universe,
The writing of his thought sublime.
Attune to that grand rhythm thy life,
O proud and wilful heart of man,
Nor mar with petulance and strife
The order of God's perfect plan.

O hark ! above the nearer din
Of earthly discord hear it roll !
Above the moans of woe and sin,
The primal music of the soul !
O hark again ! more deep than all,
More full, and musical, and sweet,
Richer than many waters' fall,
Christ's voice, sublime and all-complete !

O Voice that woke creation's morn,
Whose every utterance giveth life,
Breathe Thou the word that ushers dawn,
Speak peace across sin's stormy strife.
Then unto Thee, Eternal King,
From earth's low strand to heaven's bright shore,
All hearts one strain sublime shall sing,
All hallelujah, evermore !

The Aixie.

HE sat beside a willow-circled lake
Which mirrored Scandinavia's steel-blue sky,
So still, the brooding wild-duck in the brake
Forgot to watch him with her jealous eye,
But sat secure upon her secret nest,
Content to feel the eggs beneath her breast.

But he, poor sprite, to whom a heart was given
To feel, a mind his destiny to know,
Forlorn and sad beneath the sunny heaven,
Was musing on his strange and hopeless woe,
To be alone shut out, by Heaven's decree,
From life's best boon of immortality.

At length he spoke, nor noticed how the bird
Darted out startled from the willow-shade;
So rapt in thought was he, he never heard
The sudden whirring that her swift wings made,
Nor steps of child just coming home from school,
With naked feet on pebbles wet and cool.

“No hope for me ; this is not life !” he cried.

“This is but dreary waiting for my death.
No joy can ever reach my soul,” he sighed,

“For it is slain before it entereth.

This thought debars all comfort from my heart,—
In everlasting life I have no part.”

Ceasing, he suddenly became aware

That by his side there stood a little child,
A little girl, blue-eyed, with golden hair,

Blown back in ringlets from her forehead mild,—
A pretty childish form, and full of grace,
With sweet, sad wonder in her gentle face.

“Our good Lord gives eternal life,” she said,

“To all who ask it. Come and pray with me.”

He rose. With eager step the way she led

Into the deeper wood, there bowed the knee,
And prayed, in childlike trust, to One so near,
So loving, that he could not fail to hear.

“Dear heavenly Father, let us live with Thee

Forever and forever, for the days,
Unless they had no end, too short would be

To see and know Thee, and to sing Thy praise.
For Jesus’ sake, the life eternal give,
Forever and forever let us live !”

Then rising, "I am glad," she said, "for now

You need not be so sorry any more.

Good-night!" He bent and kissed the upturned brow,

And then she vanished. Trunks of oak-trees hoar
Hide her small form, as through the wood-paths dim
She hastened, singing low some holy hymn.

The long, long twilight deepened into night,

And yet it was not dark, for all the sky
Was gleaming with the brilliant northern light ;

He watched the red and golden pennons fly,
Sitting alone upon the grassy slope,
Asking his heart this question, "May I hope?"

A touch upon his shoulder. Lo, a form

Beside him, clothed in raiment dazzling white !
The air around grew fragrant, light, and warm ;
All things looked lovely in that presence bright.
One could not fear nor sorrow, but rejoice,
Hearing the music of that heavenly voice.

"Seek," said the angel, "one to whom belongs

The gift divine of immortality,
There may be one among those countless throngs,
Willing to cede his endless life to thee."
The mortal spirit looked his longing vast
Into the eyes angelic ere they passed.

The angel paused, and met the burning look
Which fain would shape itself in words, but failed.
The unasked question all his great heart shook,
Till from his shuddering wings the glory paled.
“I cannot cast the fair, immortal crown
Which God has given, from my forehead down !”

Tears of celestial pity filled his eyes,
And tender benedictions softly fell
From lips which trembled with deep sympathies,
And glorious hopes Heaven had not bid him tell,
Till, while his words' sweet music lingered on,
As vanishes the rainbow, he was gone.

And then began the search, from day to day,
Among the human crowds which seem to hold
God's peerless gift they cannot cast away
As worth far less than earth's polluting gold.
“Are ye immortal?” wonderingly he cried.
Some mocked, some laughed, one, startled, turned aside

To pray and think upon the endless years
His soul must live ; one answered boldly, “ No !
For death is death. Leave idle hopes and fears
Of superstitious folly.” “ But I *know*,”
The sprite responded, all his soul's surprise,
And almost anger, in his eager eyes,—

“I know the life beyond the gate of death.

I have seen heaven and hell. I know what lies
Beyond this realm of fleeting, mortal breath,
The world of solemn, fixed realities.”

“Dreams !” cried the infidel, and would have passed,
But those beseeching accents held him fast :

“Give unto me the immortality

Which thus thou scornest. Sink to endless sleep,
And yield the peerless privilege to me,
The boon of endless life for aye to keep.
My whole soul shudders on the fearful brink
Of nothingness and death. I gaze and shrink !”

Whether it were the horror in that look,

Or quickened doubts, which never wholly slept,
His nice-poised frame of specious reasoning shook,
And o’er his heart a thrill of terror crept.
“Nay, get thee hence !—Yet what a fool am I,
A madman’s vain petition to deny !”

He hastened on his way, and tried again

To balance in his reason’s shaken scales
The misty cobwebs of a sophist’s brain
Against the gold of truth, which still prevails,
Unless the stubborn will perverts the beam,
And makes the solid truth more light than error seem.

* * * * *

There was a grave, and one in weeds of woe
 Knelt weeping by the new-set burial-stone ;
And now she called on him who slept below,
 And now she prayed for death, with bitter moan,
And then she sobbing said, "Ah, woe is me !
It had been surely better not to be !"

Then spoke a voice beside her, "Let it be
 As though thou hadst not been. Bestow, I pray,
On me the being which oppresses thee ;
 Then mayst thou sleep the peaceful years away
In endless, dreamless slumber, nor awake
E'en when the resurrection morn shall break."

"No, no !" she cried, "this one joy let me keep—
 The knowledge that we two shall meet again.
No other charm hath death, no rest hath sleep,
 The only light of life and balm of pain."
He looked on her, and wondered as he thought
Of earth's Redeemer, that she named him not.

And "Strange !" he murmured, as he turned away,
 " That these immortal hearts can sorrow thus
O'er woes which are so transient—earthly day
 So brief, eternity so glorious !
They have as little reason to be sad
As I can have, poor mortal, to be glad."

* * * * *

There was a chamber where a sick man lay,
And death stood watching; and the clock's slow beat
Ticked his few moments one by one away.

A dire disease had bound him hands and feet,
And grim despair, with as tenacious hold,
Held the lost spirit in its hideous fold.

A stranger entered, stood beside the bed,
And would have spoken; but the sick man turned
And cursed him, ere a single word he said,
And in the look which in those dread eyes burned
He read the soul, its guilt, remorse, and fears,
Its speechless horror of the eternal years.

And what he would have asked he uttered not,
But spoke of One whose blessed touch, he said,
Was antidote to sin and death. Ah, naught
Availed his earnest words—the man was dead!
And he passed out into the sunny air,
Still haunted by that look of wild despair.

And it so haunted him he could not rest,
But wandered full of musings to and fro;
And he returned at length, an unknown guest,
Into that house of mourning and of woe,
To look upon the dead, in hope that now
Death's restful calm had settled on the brow.

Alas ! the soul in its departure found
No light upon the dread unfathomed deep,
And so no smile of peacefulness profound,
As when God giveth his beloved sleep,
Left its bright impress as the soul took flight,
No dawning of the everlasting light.

Poor seeker after life ! his heart did ache
With burden of a grief beyond his own,
And he bethought him of his quiet lake,
And hied to rest him there and think alone.
And there came one who loved him, and he told
Into her gentle ear his wanderings manifold.

“And now I thank my God !” she cried at length,
“That He hath opened to my soul a way
To bless thee, pouring all the boundless strength
Of love into one gift to last for aye.
Most gladly, my beloved, give I thee,
Since God permits, my immortality !”

And as he could not speak for tears, she said,
“My life is but a taper’s feeble spark ;
Then let it light thy nobler lamp instead.
Though this small flame expire in utter dark,
Before the throne of God thy soul shall shine,
And my soul live for evermore in thine.”

But then he spoke, his full heart running o'er,

“I bless, I bless thee ! Yet it cannot be !

How could I live upon the radiant shore

Of deathless joy, forever missing thee

In endless sorrow? Better dreamless sleep

Than heart-sick loneliness for aye to keep.

“I cannot take thy gift ! my heart would break.

I knew not until now how much the stress

Of my desire for life was for thy sake.

Love-prompted, and my dread of nothingness,

By shrinking of my spirit from the thought

Of losing thee or leaving thee, was wrought.”

Two loving hearts in generous rivalry

Could neither yield its earnest resolute will :

One pressing its sweet purpose eagerly,

And one as constant in refusing still

The self-forgetful gift of priceless life,

Till Christ's voice reconciled the sinless strife.

For then He came, the Lord of life, and said,

“My death hath purchased life for all—for thee.

My servants are the living, not the dead.

Behold, I give thee immortality !”

Then, ere the happy soul could speak its praise,

The vision vanished in the sunset's blaze.

Then, taking his long-silent harp, he sang
Such joyous and exultant grateful strains
That all the glowing lake with music rang,
And the woods listened, and the dewy plains,
And passing angels lingered in their flight,
With gladness deepening in their eyes of light.

In the blank wall which shut his being up—
Oblivion's prison—oped a golden gate,
And showed an endless prospect, boundless hope,
And joy and life illimitably great
And ever-blessed. Well might praise o'erflow
The heart which never hoped such bliss to know.

And are such joys dissolved in common life?
Heaven's priceless pearls in this our human cup?
Such hope sublime should still care's petty strife,
Such rapturous knowledge lift our spirits up
O'er earth's low clouds, to life serene and high,
Worthy the heirs of immortality.

On the Mountain.

BENEATH the pines they sat that autumn day,
Upon the mountain, where beneath them rolled
Unto the broad blue river, far away,
A sea of tossing gold.

A sea of maples, dotted here and there
With hemlock green, or oak of russet brown,
And in the distance, through the smoky air,
Appeared the silent town.

No sound, except of bells, could come so far,
And they came sweet and low, too musical
Upon the whisper of the woods to jar,
Or voice of water-fall.

They saw, beyond the gorgeous autumn trees,
The white-winged vessels on the river's breast
Glide to their place among the city's quays,
As sea-birds to their nest.

The pines' low music, like the distant song
Of angels, filled the pauses of the woods,
And farewell chirpings from the gathering throng
Of the departing birds.

They talked of life and all their former aims,
Dwelt on each lofty dream and fair ideal,
And then on duty and its urgent claims,
The commonplace and real.

"How oft," they said, "our projects brave and fair,
And full, apparently, of lasting worth,
Like rainbow-colored bubbles in the air,
Break at the touch of earth !

"And oft," they said, "although we seem so free
To choose, to will, to do or to forbear,
We meet resistless pressure, so that we
Are baffled everywhere,

"A force as real and constant as the weight
Of the invisible air, which naught can flee ;
What shall we call it—Providence or fate ?
God's will, or destiny ?"

She spoke, with glowing cheek and sparkling eye,
Of all that she had hoped to be and do,

Her pure ambition and her purpose high,
Her earnest strivings too.

And then, with trembling lips and gathering tears,
She told how she had failed in much she tried,
And how the cherished plans of earlier years
Had all been set aside.

Not by the slackening of a feeble will,
Not by dull languor had the plan been marred,
But where her eager feet were pressing still
She found the pathway barred,—

Barred by the iron gates of circumstance,
Hedged in by duty, till she felt that God
Himself had closed the door, forbid advance
In paths she would have trod.

“Until,” she said, “of all I hoped to be,
All I was sure I should be, when the chains
Which bound my early youth should set me free,
Only the dream remains.

“Though then I knew my will could have no scope
For action 'neath another's stern control,
Yet Christ, I thought, in time will surely ope
The prison of my soul.

“But still I find my purposes are crossed,
My plans are thwarted, and the good I sought
To do on earth, remains, like ripe seed lost,
Only a barren thought.

“And so, alas! I have but spent my strength
For naught, in vain, in spite of hope and prayer;
Have toiled in life’s hard field, to reap at length
Only such failure there!”

There was no lack of tender sympathy
In those calm eyes of his, whose steadfast gaze
Dwelt on the mountains as he made reply,
Grand in their purple haze.

The mountains which beyond the river stood,
With noble curves of outline, tender lights
And shades, where knoll or dell or wood
Varied their misty heights.

“And is it not enough,” he said, “for thee
To recognize, in circumstance, that Hand?
Christ’s ways with us are deep; hereafter we
Shall know and understand.”

“Yet Christ,” she said, “who gave my higher powers,
Would have me dare and do, enjoy, achieve;

But petty cares fill up life's fleeting hours,—
What leisure do they leave

“For aspiration, work for God and man,
For scaling heights of knowledge, thence to see
Still more of God? I fail in all life's plan
For want of liberty.”

He answered slow, as one whom Christ had taught
Slow lessons by the years that came and went;
Up from his heart's deep well he drew the thought
For her encouragement.

“Christ's richest gifts are twofold—first relief,
Then blessing. From our hearts He takes the thorn
And makes the rose of it. Out of our grief
Our purest joy is born.

“From out the ashes of our pleasures lost
Spring up the fragrant, snow-white flowers of peace;
When hopes of human rescue all are crossed,
He brings his own release.

“In his beloved hands dread death became
The gate of blessed life; and thou shalt see
Thy bondage, touched by his transforming flame,
Become thy liberty.”

He paused. "But can this be on earth," she said,
"Or only when I tread the heavenly street?
Will He take off, before He crowns my head,
These fetters from my feet?"

He answered, "Let us hear the Master speak
Through those who left the record in his word.—
I walk at liberty, because I seek
Thy blessed precepts, Lord.—

"And—where the Spirit of the Lord abides
Is liberty;—the glorious liberty
Of sons of God.—Who in such words confides
He cannot but be free.

"Easy the charm which breaks our chain. Each day
We utter it, and yet the strife is o'er
If we 'Thy will be done,' can truly say,—
Then bondage is no more.

"And blessed be his will, whose boundless love
Hath promised all things! Naught can come of ill,
For all, till we are safe in heaven above,
Shall work out blessing still.

"Yea, every longing of the soul for rest,
Each aspiration, all for which we pray,

These will He give us when He sees it best,
Or show his better way.

“O that my soul had wings! we sighing cry.

What wings? The dove's to hover round our nest
On sweet love-errands? Eagle-wings to fly
To glory's mountain-crest?

“Or angel-wings to speed on tasks of heaven?

Ah, when God's work demands increase of powers,
The wider range and freer flight are given,
If such a task be ours.

“But wings to fly away and be at rest

He giveth not, for whither should we go,
Away from duty on an endless quest
Across a sea of woe?

“The fretting friction of our daily life,

Heart-weariness with loving patience borne,
The long endurance of the inward strife,
The painful crown of thorn,

“Prepare the heart for God's own dwelling-place,

Adorn with sacred loveliness his shrine,
And brighten every inconspicuous grace,
For God alone to shine.

“As Druid builders on the ancient plains,
Stonehenge’s giant circles stretching wide,
Smoothed every massive block with toil and pains
Upon the inner side,

“In honor of the gods who dwelt within
Beside the altar of their sacrifice,
So must our secret souls be purged from sin
For Christ’s omniscient eyes.

“And He alone who only knoweth man,
And knoweth life and what its changes teach,
Is wise to choose and competent to plan
The earthly path of each.

“Perhaps, as once to David, so to thee
He kindly saith, ‘That this was in thine heart
To do, is well, and yet it must not be,
Beloved though thou art.’

“Noble to human eyes appears the dream
Of Christian life thine earnest heart had wrought :
But wouldst thou follow Christ’s or thine own scheme ?
Thine, or his perfect thought ?

“I know thy heart gives fullest answer,—‘ His.’
Look when the tracings of his finger run

Through circumstance, this daily life which is,
And which thou, blind, wouldst shun.

“What is the fetter which hath galled thee so?
See, it is but the Master’s loving hand.
Dost thou not welcome it? Wouldst thou forego
The dear, though hard command?

“If thou art restive, it is but to bless,
Its pressure grows so heavy. Only yield
And it shall prove thy Saviour’s kind caress,
And all thy hurt is healed.”

She bowed her head upon her hands; the tears
Fell like the drops of summer’s blessed rain,
The weariness, the inward strife of years,
The dull, heart-aching pain,

Passed all away, as clouds disperse and flee
At touch of sunshine, and aloud she thought,
“Hath Jesus been indeed so long with me
And yet I knew him not?

“Hath He indeed been ordering all my life,
While I have spurned his plan, and sought my own?
It never would have been, this sinful strife,
If I his voice had known!”

“Yea, He knows that !” he answered. “Earth would
be,

In spite of sorrow, far too sweet a place
For discipline, might we but always see
The Master’s loving face.

“O, when we look from realms of perfect light
On all the path which so perplexed us here,
When all the clouds and darkness of our night
In glory disappear,

“How poor will seem the schemes we blindly made !
How wise and good Christ’s plan for every soul !
Strange that we hesitate and are afraid
To yield to his control !

“Not only must we learn to do, but bear ;
Not only act, but suffer ; firmly tread
The lowly, thorn-strewn, weary pathway, where
The Man of sorrows led.

“Ah ! what are we, poor scholars in Christ’s school,
Who think to choose our lessons ? Let Him teach
What pleaseth Him, all-wise to overrule
The daily task of each.”

“But what,” she questioned, “if He take the books
From which He bid us study, all away,
And we, with folded hands and puzzled looks,
Sit idle all the day?

“What if the task He set, when but commenced,
Be given to other hands, or laid aside,
All paths to other labor closely fenced,
Our prayer for work denied?”

He answered gently, “Only heaven can show
If work or waiting bring the best reward.
Let us not choose, we only need to know
The bidding of our Lord.

“It may be that He lets our labor cease,
And calls us from our active sphere apart,
To talk with us in secret, breathe his peace,
Console and cheer our heart.

“It may be that his only word is ‘Trust!’
Be not found wanting if He try thee so,
But answer, ‘Lord, I know not what Thou dost,
Nor do I ask to know.’

“Ah, let us sit in silence at his feet,
Intent to hear his words of wondrous grace.

Rebuked like Martha by those accents sweet,
Let us take Mary's place.

“Dear friend, thy heart is sad and sorrowful
Because the fabric which the slow years weave—
Thy life—to thee looks narrow, coarse, and dull.
Courage! thou needst not grieve.

“When dipped in Jordan's wave, and sunned in light
That knows no shading on the farther shore,
Thy weft will shine all lustrous, pure, and white,
Unstained for evermore.

“And God, whose wonderful eternity
Knows neither past nor future, sees thee now,
Crowned with the grand perfection that shall be,
His glory round thy brow.

“Why do we grieve, when neither change nor chance
Can work us evil? Let us trust for time,
Heirs of an infinite inheritance,
A name and home sublime!”

She raised her eyes and smiled, as one who saw
Afar the dawn of perfect peace and rest
Of freedom under Christ's most loving law,
Of acquiescence blest.

“ Master,” she prayed, “ increase our faith, that hence
We lose not sight of heavenly hills serene ;
Faith, substance of things hoped, and evidence
Of what is yet unseen !”

In the Field.

IS this waste tangled wilderness
The Master's field ?

This thorny fallow-ground, this barren place,
Which naught, it seems, but poisonous weeds can yield ?
Is this Thy field, O Lord ? and must we toil
Year after year, in such a thankless soil ?

Is this the nursery-ground of heaven ?

Can plants of ours
Grow up to vie with angel-growths, and even
Adorn Christ's marriage-feast with fruit and flowers ?
Can harvests ripen here so rich and wide
That Christ's vast longings will be satisfied ?

Desponding in the drought and heat,

I hear a voice,
Repeating with its heavenly accents sweet,
The story how the earth shall yet rejoice
When Christ shall reign, his blessed kingdom come,
While angel-reapers sing the harvest-home.

So be it, Lord ! Thy kingdom come !

I lift mine eyes,

For, from the field that lay so waste and dumb,

I hear the echoed prayer responsive rise,

“Thy kingdom come.” A countless multitude

Is working with me in the desert rude.

And for this blessed brotherhood

Of all the saints,

My prayers arise in love and gratitude.

When with discouragement my spirit faints,

It is a joy to see God's work progress

In better hands, to whom He gives success.

Of all the precious gifts of heaven,

So manifold,

Which God in answer to my prayers hath given,

Count I this greatest, that he hath enrolled

My name among the laborers in his field,

Though poor the harvest that my corner yield.

When first I sought the healing touch

Of Jesus' hand,

“Grant this,” I prayed, “and nothing thenceforth
much

Can trouble me.” I could not understand

What care or grief could reach a soul secure
Of heaven, whose endless happiness was sure.

He laid his hand, with smile divine,
 Upon my head,
Answering, "I ransom thee, and thou art mine."
And I, who looked for rest, heard this instead,
"Go, work to-day," and then He set my feet
Here, where I bear the burden and the heat.

And now the early dews are dried,
 The songs are done
Which morning birds poured forth on every side,
My morning-glories shrivel in the sun.
Yet angels sing above me as I toil,
Plowing long furrows in the stony soil.

I have this joy, that all the seed,
 The corn of heaven,
Which for the sowing of the field I need,
By Christ's own blessed hands to me is given,
And precious are the sacred hours and dear
When to supply my need He cometh near.

And yet I sow in tears, for there
 The trodden way,

And here the rock, and here the thorns, prepare
Sad failure for my hope ; and sun by day
And frost by night the tender shoot destroy ;
Yet stands the promise, we shall reap in joy.

Patience ! for first the blade will show
 Its living green,
And then the bearded ear, and after grow
The full ripe corn in summer days serene.
Whether I wake, or sleep, and other hands
Gather my harvest, yet the promise stands:

Ah, can we gird with trust like this
 Our fainting heart ?
May we all dreary doubt and fear dismiss,
And bid our deep anxieties depart ?
Shall those for whom we bear this load of care
Be surely saved, in answer to our prayer ?

For there be those for whom we pray
 As never yet
We prayed for our own souls, whom day by day
We labor for, for whom we nightly wet
Our pillow with our bitter, yearning tears ;
Nor faith nor hope can still our aching fears.

For so did Samuel pray for Saul

With longing love.

Day after day God heard his hot tears fall,
And sent a message from the courts above,
Not this—"Thy heart's desire is granted thee!"
But—"Weep not; ask it not; it cannot be."

And yet we cannot surely tell

That Samuel failed

To win for him he loved so long and well
Eternal blessing. If his prayer availed
To wrest a victory from defeat so sore,
It would be like God's ways. We know no more.

We walk by faith, and not by sight;

Our eyes are sealed.

We cry, but echo answers out of night.
God's patient silence wraps our battle-field.
Nor can we pierce, with subtlest human skill,
The mystery of the triumphing of ill.

Lo, in our sight the holy cross

Shines all day long,

Reminding us that all our pain and loss,
Our labor, tears, and prayers, our strife with wrong,
Were borne by Him, upon whose side to be,
Whatever seems, is surely victory.

And doubtless we may trustfully

Leave in his care,

Whose heart is love and boundless sympathy,

The souls for whom our life is toil and prayer.

We keep the watch with Him ; we stand beside

The cross whereon for them the Saviour died.

Let us be patient. God hath sown

The field we till

With seeds of light and gladness for His own,

An after-crop, to burst in bloom and fill

The harvest-field with fragrant beauty when

The sheaves are gathered in, but not till then.

Let us rejoice—for He who sees

The glorious end

Of all the toil and care ; who mysteries

That try our faith can wholly comprehend ;

And who, to gain the harvest, bled and died,

Shall in the reaping-time be satisfied.

By the River.

YES, place me near the open window, where
The cool and fragrant balm of summer air
May breathe on me ;
Whence I may watch again the river's flow,
The river, whose bright changeful course I know
From spring to sea.

Think of its shining track from those high hills
Where mountain mist its rocky fountains fills,
O'er foamy fall,
Down through the pasture-valleys, green and still,
Through many a busy town with noisy mill,
This, last of all.

For here it spreads its gleaming silver wide,
And cliff and forest end on either side
In level lines ;
Beyond the jutting crags which guard the bay,
And sandy ledges stretching far away,
The ocean shines.

How calm and smooth the river's tide ! The sails
Glide slowly down, as slow the daylight fails.

Far must they roam,
They all are outward-bound ; but I, to-night,
Behold 'my spirit's haven just in sight,
My soul's sweet home.

See ! just beyond the harbor's outer bar
The beacon-light is burning like a star,
With steady beam.
And as my soul looks forth, with deep delight
It sees hope's blessed beacon shining bright
Across death's stream.

And gazing thus, my thoughts have wandered back,
With sad and joyful memories, o'er the track
Of many years ;
Not all their bitter sorrows to renew,
Not all their hours of gladness to review,
Their hopes and fears ;

But to retrace my spirit's inner life,—
Born amid grief, grown strong through toil and strife,
And calm through pain,—
From its first well-springs, trickling cool and clear,
To these calm depths, whose placid currents near
The boundless main.

The voices of the past which call to me,
The solemn echoes from the unknown sea,
 All whisper, "Peace!"
This heavenly peace which like a river flows
And bathes my soul in its divine repose
 Till all cares cease.

It is the Saviour's gift; his words were true,
"Not as the world gives, give I unto you."
 In early life
My soul went begging at its churlish gate.
It flung me wealth, and fame, and gilded state,
 With care and strife.

But still my hungry heart implored for aught
To satisfy its longing. "There is naught,"
 I cried, "in these,
Of medicine for secret ache, of rest
For weariness, of balm for wounded breast
 That prays for ease!"

Thus at the world's broad gate my spirit cried
And waited drearily, but none replied
 Nor gave to me.
I found it had no power to heal or bless,
And thus I learned its utter hollowness
 And vanity.

Then came an angel to me in disguise
Whose name was Sorrow. Tender were his eyes
Though harsh his hand.

And slowly my reluctant soul he led
Within the hearing of a Voice which said,
With sweet command,

“Come unto Me, and I will give you rest!”
How could I but obey the kind behest?

And as I turned,
Some door of heaven unbarred, to flood my way
With glimpses of the everlasting day,
Such glory burned.

Then, in my gladness, “This is peace!” I said;
But Life replied, ere many days had sped,
“Not peace, but hope!”
For while I looked, the transient gleam was gone,
As clouds across blue rifts are drifted on
In heaven’s gray cope.

Ah, then I felt the galling chains of sin!
Ah, then I found that peace is hard to win,
With such a foe!
But as I strove with evil, strength was given,
And still my steady feet were turned toward heaven,
Though faint and slow.

And thus I struggled on from day to day,
Until I felt the hostile hosts give way,
 The pressure yield ;
And then I knew a victory was won,
And I had conquered peace at last upon
 Life's battle-field.

Not that the strife was wholly ended yet,
Nor triumph perfect. Death alone can set
 On mortal brow
The victor's radiant crown. Yet peace within
Is won by conquest over self and sin
 Ev'n here and now.

“Is it not, then,” you ask, “the gift of Christ,
His precious legacy, unearned, unpriced?”

 Yea, this we know ;
But Christ's best gifts are not for him who stands
Awaiting them with idle, outstretched hands,—
 He gives not so.

He bought for us a field whereon to stand
And fight life's battle under his command
 With woe and sin :
He paid his life for power to bless, and thus
His gift is, that 'tis possible for us
 To strive, and win.

For when we strive, we win. O blest be He
Who always giveth us the victory
 In faithful strife,
And crowns the conquest with his holy peace,
Whose early beams grow brighter and increase
 To endless life !

Peace hushed the murmurs of my soul's unrest,
And silenced cares which fretted and distressed
 With weary woe ;
I trod them underfoot, nor felt them more
Than eagles feel the flinty pathway sore,
 Far, far below.

As melodies from heavenly choirs drew near,
Harsh discords died which long had pained my ear
 And vexed my soul ;
And in their place the angel-music sweet
Of peace with God and man, the days repeat,
 As swift they roll.

And now, in tempest's roar, or earthquake's shock,
My soul, in shelter of a steadfast Rock
 For safety hides ;
And when the strife of tongues is raging loud,
In the pavilion of God's curtaining cloud
 It calm abides.

No more doth passion snatch my spirit's helm
And steer where whirling torrents overwhelm,
 As formerly ;
Nor dull unrest with fever alternate,
Nor gloom with fitful mirth, nor love and hate
 With apathy.

But sacred calm and rest serene abide,
And light no cloud of grief can dim or hide ;
 For sorrow now
Is not a dreary fog of winter night,
But dewy sunrise mist suffused with light
 And golden glow.

To him who overcomes, the promises
Are full of blessing, and I think that these,
 Rich as they are,
Are meant for even me. Strange words from heaven,
"To him that overcometh shall be given
 The Morning-Star!"

I know their meaning now. Before me lies
The day, not dawned as yet, of upper skies,
 But night is past.
I stand upon life's verge, and lo ! from far
The blessed radiance of the Morning-Star
 Is o'er me cast.

My skies are crystal-clear ; no cloud is there
To mar the beauty of their twilight fair,

Awaiting dawn.

And pure and bright heaven's radiant herald gleams,
While day draws nearer with celestial beams

Of heavenly morn.

I look across the narrow stream of death
To that fair land no sorrow entereth ;

Its sweet bells chime

Their welcome to the happy pilgrim home.

Lord Jesus, let thine angels haste to come,—

I wait thy time !



Passing Away.

O RIVER of Time, how ceaselessly
Thou flowest on to the boundless sea !
Whether upon thy sunny tide
The sweet spring blossoms drop and glide,
Or whether the dreary snowflakes only
Fall in the winter cold and lonely ;
Whether we wake or whether we sleep,
Thou flowest on to eternity's deep.

'Twas long ago, in my life's sweet May,
My childhood silently floated away.
I hear the noon-bells distantly chime,
And youth glides by on the stream of time.
My days, the sunny or overcast,
Are stealing away to the changeless past ;
But I mark their flight with a smile of cheer,
And not by a sigh or a falling tear.

So often, so sadly, the people say,
" Passing away, still passing away ! "

That the words have borrowed a pensive tone,
And a shade of sadness not their own ;
And I fain would reclaim the notes again
From their minor key on the lips of men,
And make the refrain of my gladdest lay,
“ Passing away, ever passing away ! ”

For what is the transient, and what will last ?
What maketh its grave in the growing past ?
And what lives on in the deathless spheres
Where naught corrupts with the rust of years ?
Doth time, who gathers our fairest flowers,
Destroy no weeds in this world of ours ?
What rises victorious o’er dull decay ?
And what is that which is passing away ?

Our time is flying, the years sweep by
Like the flitting clouds in a breezy sky ;
But time is a drop of the boundless sea
Of an infinite eternity.
As our seas are spanned by the arching skies,
’Neath the presence of God that ocean lies,
And though tides may fall in life’s shallow bay,
Eternity’s deep is not ebbing away.

List to the words which the mourner saith,
“ The lives we have loved are lost in death ! ”

O tell him that Jesus hath brought to light
A life not subject to mortal blight.
We are not bubbles that shine and break
On the river of time in the great world's wake.
While immortality cannot decay,
Our real life is not passing away.

The trivial things of this earthly life,
Its petty cares and its noise and strife ;
Its riches that moth and rust can spoil ;
Its fretting troubles and fruitless toil ;
Its greater sorrows, its woes and pain ;
Its long despair and its hope in vain ;
Its clouds of anguish and dark dismay,—
These are the things that are passing away.

While the summers flit over earth's green plain
The roses die and the thorns remain,
But the heart's sweet flowers know a better way,
The blossoms live and the thorns decay ;
And we know that beyond heaven's crystal wall
No thorn can grow and no sweet rose fall.
Thank God that all is not passing by,
That our holiest treasures cannot die.

While our heavenly Father's throne is sure,
While eternal ages shall endure,

We need not grieve for the joys of sense
Which day after day are passing hence.
Though the heavens depart, and this lower world
Be taken away like a banner furled,
Though the sun and the steady stars be gone,
Our deathless happiness liveth on.

As we climb heaven's stairway we need not grieve
For the fine carved work of the step we leave,
For brighter than all which has gone before
Is the near approach to the Palace Door.
And oh! the joy as we enter in
And find naught gone but the stain of sin,
And know, as we look back over the way,
That only the shadows were passing away.

Sunshine and Shadow.

UNDER the trees in the meadow,
In the pleasant summer weather,
I heard the sunshine and shadow
Talking thus together :

I am heaven's own child !
The sunshine said, and smiled.
My birthright is pure gladness.
I know no gloom nor sadness.
None dreams of all that light performs :
I cherish life in all its forms,
From the rare flowers 'neath ocean's foam,
Up to the seraphim who stand,
All dazzling bright, at God's right hand,
All find in light their home.

None is so poor but round his door
Light's silver, gems, and gold are shed ;
I twine my splendors round his head ;

And if his heart will let me in,
And turn out discontent and sin,
I make a shining temple there
Whose doors admit no wearing care.
I am heaven's own child,
And I do the work of heaven,
I shed around the radiance mild
Which unto me is given ;
I live to gladden and to bless,
An emblem of heaven's happiness.

I am a child of earth,
The trembling shade replied,
And yet celestial is my birth,
Though I on earth abide ;
For I can only spring from light :
The sun in heaven that causes day
Is father also of the night.
Without a luminous, heavenly ray
The shade can never live ;
All earthly light, with radiance bright,
Must also shadows give.
Life's one great Master sendeth me
To follow where He sendeth thee.

All that He does is wisest, best ;—
Thou givest energy, I, rest ;

Thou bringest joy, I come with peace ;
Did I not bid thy shining cease,
And spread the curtain of the night,
The weary world would die of light.
Thou blestest man,—it is my joy
To share in that divine employ,
And, doing work which God has given,
I prove myself a child of heaven.

Under the trees in the meadow,
In the pleasant summer weather,
I heard the sunshine and shadow
Talking thus together.

My heart has its sunshine cheery ;
I feel that it comes from heaven ;
My heart has its shadow dreary
By the same kind Father given.

And under the trees in the meadow,
I learned a holier trust
In the Master of light and shadow,
The Merciful and Just.

The shade lies thick in the meadows,
But the hills beyond are bright ;
My present is flecked with shadows,
But the future is heaven's own light.

The Soul's Telegraphy.

GOD made an unseen telegraphic line
Between my heart and heaven,
And by it messages of love divine
And deathless hope were given.

And all day long went trust and gratitude,
And earnest, warm desires,
Up to the glorious Giver of all good,
Along the golden wires.

Alas ! there rose a fiend of pride and wrong,
And broke the heavenly cord,
And then there came, although I waited long,
No message from my Lord.

The joyous sunlight from my life-path failed,
My lamp of hope burned dim,
And shrinking fear o'er love to God prevailed,
I could not pray to Him.

But slowly to the holy house of prayer
With weary step I went,
And found a blessed Sabbath-angel there,
By God in pity sent.

He took the broken cord of priceless gold
And made it new and whole ;
Once more the current of communion rolled
From heaven unto my soul.

The pulses of celestial joy and love
Came throbbing to my heart,
And glad and grateful went my song above,
“ Oh, God,—how good thou art ! ”

Sabbath Bells.

WE are going joyfully up to the house of God !
Listen ! the bells are ringing !

A brighter sunshine beams on the pleasant road,
And we hear the angels singing,
As we think how everywhere, both in heaven and earth,
The best that there is of nobleness, goodness, worth,
From the children of earth to the seraphim bright above,
Are bowing down to the Lord of life and love,
When the Sabbath bells are ringing.

We are going thankfully up to the place of prayer !
Listen ! the bells are ringing !

God's unseen messengers meet our spirits there,
Celestial comfort bringing.
Thy ransomed children, O Father of truth and grace,
Look trustfully up to the smile on thy glorious face,
And fain would blend with the song of the cherubim
The lowly notes of their own rejoicing hymn,
When the Sabbath bells are ringing.

We are flocking gladly to Zion's holy walls !
Listen ! the bells are ringing !
The burden of trouble and care from our spirit falls,
And our thoughts are heavenward winging.
O home ! O rest ! as we lift our longing eyes,
We catch a glimpse of the glory of Paradise.
Till the pearly door shall open, thine exiles wait
With tearful patience around heaven's earthly gate,
When the Sabbath bells are ringing.

A sound floats over the narrow sea of death !
Heaven's distant bells are ringing !
O'er all the wearisome pathway far beneath
Their silver music flinging.
Each liquid note is a sweet articulate word,
"O welcome home ! Enter the joy of thy Lord !"
The fetters drop from our hands, and our willing feet
To the Saviour's throne ascend the golden street
While the Sabbath bells are ringing.

When Thou hast Shut Thy Door—Pray.

L ORD, I have shut my door,
Shut out life's busy cares and fretting noise;
Here in the silence they intrude no more:
Speak Thou, and heavenly joys
Shall fill my heart with music sweet and calm,
A holy psalm.

Yes, I have shut my door
Even on all the beauty of thine earth,
To its blue ceiling, from its emerald floor,
Filled with spring's bloom and mirth.
From these thy works I turn, thyself I seek,
To Thee I speak.

And I have shut my door
On earthly passion, all its yearning love,
Its tender friendships, all the priceless store
Of human ties. Above
All these my heart aspires. O Heart divine,
Stoop Thou to mine.

Lord, I have shut my door !

Come Thou and visit me. I am alone,
Come, as when doors were shut Thou cam'st of yore
And visitedst thine own.

My Lord ! I kneel with reverent love and fear,
For Thou art here.

Failure.

JESUS, my Lord !
The day is past, with all its toil and care,
Dark shadows lie o'er earth and on my heart,—
There is no night, no darkness where Thou art !
O let the weary come to thee in prayer,
According to thy word.

Lord, I have striven
To do some work for God and man to-day ;
O Thou who orderest all the tasks of life,
Give me at length the victory in the strife,
Before Thou callest me from toil away
To restful work in heaven.

For I have failed.
I did not reach the end my effort sought,
I could not stem the raging tide of ill,
Nor bend to thine the proud and stubborn will ;
To raise to heaven the idol-trammeled thought
My skill hath not availed.

Lord, pardon me !
If I had done thy will in former days,
Had always with untiring vigor wrought,
And to thy work my loftiest powers had brought,
A more efficient life would speak thy praise
And richer harvests see.

Jesus, my Lord,
I lay my futile efforts at thy feet.
Thou who canst make success from failure spring,
From even these some good result mayst bring,
While unto me thy voice, so loving-sweet,
Speaks the forgiving word.

Success.

I THANK Thee, O my Lord !
Not utterly in vain my hands have wrought,
Not unaccepted their poor offering brought.
I have not wasted time and strength and thought
On work of thine, nor wept and prayed for naught.
I thank Thee, O my Lord.

Thank God, not all in vain !
My confidence had almost worn away,
As I had watched and waited, day by day,
And years passed, lighted by hope's failing ray,
As still I knelt, the self-same prayer to pray,
Thank God, not all in vain.

Great Giver of all good !
Thou gavest me the boon I sought, success
In long endeavors darkened souls to bless.
To lighten hearts weighed down by deep distress,
To lead them up to Thee and happiness,
Thou Giver of all good !

I thank Thee, O my Lord,
That now these loved and longed-for friends of mine
Rejoice in glorious hope and peace divine.
How glad we journey on in ways of thine,
For ever lighted by thy smile benign,
O Thou most gracious Lord !

Thy smile can brighten all.
Still let me trust when round me glooms the night,
And never doubt thy wisdom, love, and might,
In thine own time, which evermore is right,
Through breaking clouds will dawn thy blessed light,
That smile which brightens all.

The Morning Cometh.

NO more, in the darkness dreary,
Night-winds sighing, faint and weary,
Breathe their lonely miserere

O'er the desert of our world ;
In the east the dawn is springing,
Second-advent bells are ringing !
Lo ! the blessed Day-star, bringing
Light's broad banner all unfurled !

Long hath light with darkness striven ;
Lo ! the gloomy clouds are riven !
Look ! the glorious blue of heaven
Shineth on life's troubled sea !
Brighter grows the broad reflection,
Darkness dies, by God's direction,
'Tis the morn of resurrection !
Glory, glory, Lord, to thee !

The Knight of the Rosy Cross.

THOU wearest brightest roses on thy breast,
Rose above fragrant rose of brightest hue,
Fair dewy buds in mossy calyx dressed,
With white and glowing crimson peeping through.

It seems more like an ornament of joy
Than any cross, and that sweet smile of thine
Forbids that one should guess the sharp annoy
Of piercing thorns where such bright roses shine.

But I am of thine order, and I know
The painful secret of the Rosy Cross,
How every blossoming joy hides thorns below,
How that calm smile surmounteth pain and loss.

None see the thorns but Jesus, while around
The fragrance and the bloom of flowers is poured,
Thou healing balm for other hearts hast found,
And in thy soul dwells comfort from the Lord.

Hope against Hope.

✓
IS it then wasted, all the long endeavor?
Are they all lost, those pearls of price untold?
Those years of love and labor gone forever?
Lavished in vain, my heart's best gems and gold?

Nay, O my Lord! I laid my whole soul's treasure,
All that I loved or longed for, at thy feet,—
Tread Thou upon my purple at thy pleasure!
Gather my scattered pearls, and thus complete

My heart's one longing,—not as I had planned it,
But as Thou wilt. I trust thy changeless truth.
I welcome life, Lord, as Thou shalt command it,
Thou know'st the lost endeavors of my youth.

And somewhere, yet, I hope to find the beauty
Of flowers springing from these long lost seeds;
Under thy hand divine that path of duty
May teem with flowers, where now I see but weeds.

Invocation.

SPEAK to me, O my Lord ! for sad and lonely
Pass all the hours by Thee uncomforted ;
Thy words are spirit, they are life, they only,—
Be not Thou silent, lest my heart lie dead.

Speak to me, Lord ! for earth thy glory hideth,
Thy gracious face is seen in heaven alone,
Yet in thy word my longing soul confideth,
And Thou hast said—Thou wilt not leave thine own.

Speak to me, Lord ! my weary watch I'm keeping,
Faint and disheartened, when my task was set ;
I've given thy message, hoping, praying, weeping,
And lo ! these hearts are closed against Thee yet.

Speak to me, Lord ! dost Thou not hear my pleading ?
Shall all my life-work no acceptance gain ?
• Must daily labor, nightly interceding,
• Yea, fervent prayer itself, be all in vain ?

Speak to me, Lord ! the waves of doubt roll o'er me,
Faith's anchor scarce the heavy strain can bear.
O let me know Thee on my way before me,
Lest my heart sink in sorrow and despair.

The Reply.

THEN Jesus answered, Lo, I stand and knock
Unwearied, at each heart's reluctant door ;
I wait until the close-barred gates unlock,
As at thine own, a few short years before.

Canst thou not watch in patience with me there ?
Canst thou not drink one drop of all my cup ?
My baptism, prayed for once, canst thou not bear,
Nor tread my path with me to hold thee up ?

O thou of little faith ! most near was I
When thou didst think me farthest, and mine arms
Were opened to enfold in sympathy
Thy heart, which trembled in its weak alarms.

By suffering borne with me, and for my sake,
By pain endured for that for which I died,
Most fully, deeply, doth thy heart forsake
My fellowship,—with thee I then abide.

Thy tears with mine bedew Gethsemane,
Thy prayers with mine ascend before the throne,
Thy sufferings blend with mine on Calvary,
And by all these I claim thee as mine own.

The Stars.

STAR above star ! Star beyond star !
None know how many, how great, how far !
They are hosts of God that slowly pass
Before his throne on the sea of glass.
A grand procession, a march sublime,
Begun at the wondrous birth of time,
And growing, in God's own light, more rife
For ever with beauty, and joy, and life.

Before Him they burn with adoring flame ;
He calleth them each by its secret name ;
And each, with its myriads of happy souls,
On its endless circuit of gladness rolls.
What wondrous glories they see and hear
Whose life is not on this fallen sphere—
Who are not shut out from the face of Him
Who dwelleth between the cherubim !

Poor children of earth, so sin-defiled,
So far from the blessed Home exiled,

We look from our chilly waste at night,
And see its distant lamps burn bright,—
We think of the radiance around the Throne,
Which none of us ever hath seen or known,—
We remember our long and weary years,
We watch by heaven's outer gate in tears.

O Father, open and let us in !
And wash us pure from the stain of sin,
Wipe Thou our desolate tears away,
And welcome us home to thy world of day,—
That we gaze no more from these barren plains
Between the storm-clouds and gloomy rains,
With hearts that ache 'neath our prison bars,
To catch the glimmer of distant stars.

The Peace of God.

AH, there be those whose lives are cursed
By passion's storm which knows no calm,
Some such have heard of peace, and thirst
For its cool cup of blessed balm.
Long did I seek its secret spring.
One day, when idly wandering
In the Cathedral's silent aisle,
To gaze at paintings on the wall,
Or feel the awe that ancient pile
Must kindle in the hearts of all,
A picture caught my roving eye.
It was sweet St. Cecilia's face,
Solemn with thought divinely high,
Yet beautiful in maiden grace.
There was a light on that pure brow,
A restfulness in those calm eyes,
Which e'en as I recall it now,
Awakes again the deep surprise,
The wondering joy to recognize

What my own soul had sought for years,
And, kneeling lowly at her shrine,
I prayed for peace with many tears,
Yet still I felt it was not mine.
How many eves this vesper chime
Hath called me from my daily care,
To kneel again at sunset time
And utter that imploring prayer !
How oft God seems to let the cry
Of earth's great sorrow rushing by,
Pass heaven's barred gates and wander far
Beyond the light of hope's last star,
Out to the waste of dark despair !
And yet God always heareth prayer.
His boundless goodness answered mine,
And sent me peace, his gift divine.

Thank God for peace ! There's naught on earth
That can with its sweet calm compare ;
It is not like the bubble mirth
That shines and breaks in childhood's air ;

Nor like the flashing light of joy
That gleams across the hearth of youth ;
Its brightness time can ne'er destroy,
'Tis founded on God's changeless truth.

How many years, with weary quest,
I sought its pure, celestial spring,
Athirst for that cool cup of rest,
The balm for troubles poisoned sting.

Full many a thorn which pierced my feet
Was scattered in my path of life ;
Full oft I suffered sad defeat
In battle-fields of daily strife.

I knew I could not turn aside
To shun what grieved me day by day,
The spacious world is not so wide
That one can flee from care away.

I learned life's lesson,—to endure
My daily trials, great or small,
With willing, cheerful patience,—sure
That God in kindness sendeth all.

So came that peace into my soul
Which former years had sought in vain,
It reigns beyond this world's control ;
Care cannot break the calm again.

But pure and still its holy light
Is shining like the smile of God ;

And, guided by its radiance bright,
I trace the path that Jesus trod.

The tapers of earth's transient bliss
May fade and perish, one by one,
No change can ever come o'er this
Bright herald of the rising sun.

This calm and holy morning star
Will shed its clear and steady ray,
Till breaks in glory from afar
Heaven's perfect, everlasting day.

White Blossoms.

THE snow-white flowers of summer-time !
Fair globes of spotless purity,—
Frail, blossoming vines that cling and climb,
With star-gemmed branches floating free,
Large, heavy roses,—dropping slow
Their perfumed snowflakes to the ground,—
Sweet lilies with their heads bent low,
As if Christ's praise, so long ago,
Still held them listening to its sound.

If they have caught such purity,
If such perfection lives in them,
Which are but as the broidery
Upon thy garment's outer hem,
O Thou all-perfect Christ ! how bright
The beauty glowing where Thou art !
How radiant every saint in light,
Who lives and brightens in thy sight,
And loves and knows Thee heart to heart !

Desmodia.

DESMODIA stands in the summer woods,
The loneliest flower of all ;
Sadder than gentians ever-closed,
Or desert palm-tree tall.

For the poor blind gentians cluster close
In their green leaf's fond embrace ;
And the blossoms of the lonely palm
Look in each other's face.

While poor Desmodia's heavy leaves
Droop in the languid air,
But may not bless with dewy shade
Her blossoms frail and fair.

They stand far off on their airy stem,
And none would ever know
These leaflets drank the light and dew
That those pale buds might blow.

Beneath the moss are threads which thrill
From leaf to floweret's heart,
But fern and weeds spring up between,
They live and die apart.

Desmodia, speak to these hearts of ours,
Faint with their inward strife,
Longing, 'mid weary doubts, to see
The blossoms of our life.

Teach us that as the faithful toil
Of leaf, and stem, and root,
Evolves with subtle chemistry
Thy unseen flowers and fruit,—

So we, who grow in patient trust,
Through heat, and frosts, and showers,
Shall see at last, in Christ's dear hands,
Our life's unfading flowers.

Winter Dawn.

I.

NOT one sunny gleam lights up
The silver frost-work on the pane,
Dawn is prised by the cloud
And seems to struggle all in vain.
Earth looks up in cold despair,
Will daylight ever come again?

On her frozen bosom lies
A vast untrodden waste of snow,
O'er whose dreary, gray expanse
No penciled shadows come and go ;
There's no light from whose eclipse
The wavering lines of shade might flow.

In the valley lieth dead
The river in his icy shroud,
Passing night-winds, wailing, chant
His mournful requiem aloud.

O'er him motionless there hangs
A dark and heavy pall of cloud.

Can the morning ever lift
These death-weights placed upon her eyes?
Can earth ever free herself
From all the gloom that on her lies?
Will the storm-clouds ever part,
Revealing blue and radiant skies?

II.

Lo! a breath from God hath rent
The heavy veil of cloud asunder!
Light! but not the lightning's flash!
Sound! but not the roll of thunder!
See! the dead morn wakes to life
With a cry of joy and wonder.

Lo! the mighty sun stands victor
On the battlement of cloud!
Earth awakes with sudden rapture,
Sings his triumph-song aloud!
Hark! the river's strong heart pulsates
Underneath his snowy shroud.

Clouds, like startled bats at morning,
 Flit on dusky wings away.
Sunbeams light a world of diamonds
 Hung on every branch and spray.
O'er the exquisite snow-carvings
 Fairy-penciled shadows play.

God hath changed the world ! Take courage.
 Not a tempest-cloud can lower,
Sky of heart and life enshrouding,
 But shall yield to dawn's bright hour,
When across despair's grim chaos
 God shall breathe his word of power.

My Field.

THE night had come ; the moonlight whitely lay
Athwart the field where I had sowed all day
Seed I should ne'er behold
Waving its harvest gold.

Naught even showed that seed was hidden there ;
In pallid light lay furrows long and bare ;
No blade, no leaf was seen,
Signing its promise green.

And on the shore the little shallop lay,
Which in the morn must bear me far away,
Where I might never know
Whether the seed did grow.

And if I wept, 'twas none but God could see
How much the hope of harvest was to me.
He sent his angel down,
My trembling trust to crown.

His gentle angel led me by the hand,
Until we stood upon the bare sown land,
And then he turned and smiled
With eyes serene and mild.

“Behold!” he said, “to still thy human fear,
In one short hour will God unfold the year!”
And as he spoke the word
The barren clods were stirred.

And tiny blades crept out into the light,
And grew, and grew, before my wondering sight;
And then the ears were seen,
Long-bearded, full, and green.

And while I watched the waving grain, behold
The heads bent down with weight of ripened gold.
The angel said, “The Lord
Shall give thee this reward.

“Fear not to get thee hence across the sea,
In harvest-time I’ll bind thy sheaves for thee.
Thy field may ripen late.
Fear not, but trust, and wait!”

A little cloud sailed by and hid the moon,
My angel comforter was gone too soon.

A tremor blurred the air,—
Again my field lay bare ;

Except that near me, close beside my feet,
Remained one handful of the golden wheat ;
God's token that for me
Rich harvest yet should be.

And in my bosom, cherished, loved, behold
These precious ears of sacred harvest gold !
Such fruit my field shall bear,
I leave it in God's care.

Help, Lord!

L ORD, in thy house to-day
I heard thy faithful children, humbly kneeling,
Thy help from heaven pray,
With voices tremulous with earnest feeling.
“O help us, grant thine aid,
Work with us, Lord!”—they prayed.

There were the sorely tried,
Asking thy might against their fierce temptation;
Those who soul's food provide
For others, seeking heavenly inspiration;
Souls overwhelmed with grief
Imploring thy relief.

There were thy workers brave,
With high endeavor all their powers o'ertasking,
Striving the lost to save,
Strength from thine own almighty fullness asking;
Souls seeking light, perplexed
With doubts, and sorely vexed.

My Lord, I dare not say
 "Help *me*!" No work my inert soul is doing ;
 Thine aid I dare not pray,
 My heart no great and noble aim pursuing ;
 Nor say, "Lord, work with me!"
 While my hands idle be.

Yet, Lord, work *in* me! Wake
 My drowsy spirit from its guilty sleeping.
 Let me thy hard plow take,
 Where worthier souls may follow, sowing, reaping.
 The will to work, I ask,
 E'en in the lowest task.

Make me thy servant, Lord,
 Though but to wash the feet of those more holy.
 I ask not for reward,
 But only, through such work, however lowly,
 The right to look to Thee,
 And pray, "Lord, work with me!"

The Return of the Birds.

YONDER, in the meadows wet with rain,
A little bird was singing
A low, sweet, melancholy strain;
But little comfort bringing
To my tired heart that listened, faint with pain.

And I murmured,—all the sky is gray,
The twilight falleth dreary;
One bird only trills its pensive lay
From sodden fields, rain-weary,
Even while he sings the pale light dies away.

Then across the cloudy twilight sky,
Too far for sound of singing,
I saw a thousand song-birds fly,
Their swift flight northward winging,
And my heart said,—Spring is coming, by and by!

God has sent one little bird to sing
In the twilight gray and dreary;

But a thousand such are on the wing,
 Flying hither, blithe and cheery,
Ah ! His summer yet its blessed joys shall bring.

I shall surely hear their happy lays
 Usher in a better morning.
God has birds enough, and sunny days,
 For another spring's adorning !
And the cloudy night grew bright with trust and praise.

“Give Me thy Heart.”

THE gracious Saviour spoke to me, a child,
“Give me thy heart,” He said ; and as He spoke,
He laid his hand upon my head and smiled,
And all the loving heart within me woke.
And I made answer gladly to his word,
“My heart is thine ; I love thee, O my Lord !”

Then He made glad my heart with heavenly love,
For like a child I trusted all He said,
And angels’ food, sweet manna from above,
Fell daily round me and my soul was fed.
By day He led me, and my nightly rest
Was taken, safe and peaceful, on his breast.

But then He said again, with sadder tone,
“Give me thy heart !” and heavy shadows fell,
And winds grew sharp, and I was all alone ;
His storms must prove my soul, I know full well.
And I made answer bravely to his word,
“My heart is thine ! Thy will be done, my Lord !”

I could not know, except through sorrow's night,
The glory of God's stars, nor that serene
And tranquil radiance, sovereign peace, the light
Which shines in darkness, with resplendent sheen
Brightening the waves of trouble, nor how dear
Christ's fellowship, when suffering brings it near.

And yet, though firm I clung to Him through pain,
"Give me thy heart!" he pleaded with me still.
I saw that though I served with hand and brain,
My heart's deep love was lavished at my will.
And so I answered meekly to his word,
"My heart is thine; take Thou and use it, Lord!"

Since then it hath been given me much to love
And much to be beloved; and lo! my Lord
Hath won some souls thereby to look above,
E'en unto Him, and healing balm hath poured
Into some broken hearts that yearned for Him,
Seeking with eyes tear-blinded, tired, and dim.

If knights for love and loyalty have spread
Their mantles in the way for queenly feet,
Lord, I would bring where Thou and thine will tread,
All that I have most costly or most sweet.
Claim what Thou wilt, I answer to thy word,
"My heart is thine—it waits thy will, my Lord!"

“Give Ye Them to Eat.”

DEAR LORD, behold this hungering multitude !
We looked to see thy heavenly manna sweet
Fast falling round them in the desert rude,
But lo ! this message, “Give ye them to eat !”

How shall we give ? Our loaves are few and small,
And great and many are the needs which press.
Thy loving heart would grieve if one should fall
Fainting with hunger in the wilderness.

Lord, in thy sacred hands we lay our bread,
Break Thou and give us for the multitude,
So shall each craving soul be duly fed,
For Thou wilt bless and multiply the food.

Trust.

JESUS, my Lord, I know not where I go,
For heavy fog hangs shroud-like o'er my way
But Thou art at my side, and since I know
That thy beloved eyes the path survey,
Marking with smile serene its steep ascent,
My soul lays down its care and its content.

I strive no more to pierce the mist, nor trace
The unknown pathway up the lone hill-side ;
I clasp thy hand, I look up in thy face,
I see thy smile, and I am satisfied.
I need not know, dear Master, what shall be,
Thou knowest, and my steps are safe with Thee.

Soul-Utterance.

MY voice is silent, yet my heart is full ;
Thoughts crowd upon me, sympathy burns deep,
They yearn to find expression ; yet my lips
Against my will their settled silence keep.

Thou God of Nature, whose rejoicing birds
Pour forth their gladness with the voice of song ;
Give me too utterance ! touch these cold, dumb lips !
My silence does thy constant goodness wrong.

Let the sealed fountains of my soul break forth ;
Draw forth my life like sword from cumbering sheath ;
Not to win laurels as a master-mind,
Not to obtain the poet's myrtle wreath ;

But only that I be what Thou didst will,
But only that I use what thou hast given,

Lest pent streams waste, lest rust consume the blade,
Lest fruitless die the gracious seed of heaven.

Fain would I bear thy message, speak for Thee,
Be thine interpreter to some who stand
Deaf, blind, beneath thy temple's starry dome,
Nor hear thy voice therein, nor see thy hand.

Fain would I utter what my soul hath seen
In blessed moments when the veil withdrawn
Revealed the radiance of the farther-shore,
The nameless brightness of the heavenly dawn.

Fain would I utter what my heart hath heard
When waste and mountain all alone it trod,
After the tempest, earthquake, fire, passed by,
The accents of the "still, small voice" of God.

O wondrous gift which unto some is given
To send their voice through every land and clime
With swift electric touch from heart to heart
Down all the listening centuries of time.

Such gift I ask not ; but I pray that those
Whose souls are strong to wield such bow and lance,

May choose their weapons from God's armory,
 "The arrows of the Lord's deliverance."

And for myself but this—if word or thought
 Which might bear strength or peace to any soul,
Lie useless dormant in my heart,—that I
 May utter it, and God its work control.

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